examining reports alleging that there has been some contamination detected in some Indian rice consignments to Iran. The Iranian Health Ministry has also been quoted as saying that all samples etc. tested by them have been proved to be satisfactory for consumption.

(c) and (d) An Iranian delegation has been invited to visit India at their earliest convenience to inspect the high standards of health and hygiene observed in the growing, processing and packaging of Indian rice exports to remove any misunderstanding in the future. All necessary information regarding the observance of the highest health and hygiene standards has been shared with the Iranian Ministry of Health which is the nodal authority for determining health and hygiene standards of food imports into Iran including rice.

Import of commodities to meet demand

609. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of the impending drought condition in large parts of country, Government decided to import commodities to meet the demands;

(b) if so, the extent of commodities imported and to be imported; and

(c) the cost of imports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In view of the deficiency the Government had decided to import pulses, sugar and edible oils to meet the demands. During the current financial year 469500 tons of pulses have been contracted for imports by PSUs out of which 160282 tons of pulses have already been arrived in the country as on 9th November, 2009. The Government has decided to open the imports for private traders also subject to the registration with APEDA. As on 18th November 2009, the quantity of white sugar registered with APEDA for imports during current financial year are about 9.19 lac tons, while the quantity of raw sugar registered for imports is 25.58 lac tons for the same period. A total of 75.68 lac tons of edible oils has been imported during the period of November 2008 to September 2009.

(c) PEC has incurred Rs. 718.3 crores on import of pulses during the current financial year. The expenditure on imports of sugar and edible oils by the PEC is Rs. 450 crores and Rs. 42 crores respectively. The STC has incurred Rs. 684 crores on import of edible oils. The contracts made by STC for imports of sugar and pulses worth Rs. 129 crores and Rs. 277 crores respectively.

Common agricultural produces excluded from FTA with ASEAN

610. SHRI T. K. RANGARAJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Free Trade Agreement have been signed with the ASEAN countries;

(b) if so, salient features of the agreement thereto;

(c) whether common agricultural produces are excluded in the list of imports under the agreement;

(d) if so, the details of such produces; and

(e) if not, the details of the measures taken by Government to protect the indigenous produces and the interest of the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) India and ASEAN have signed the Trade in Goods Agreement on 13th August, 2009 which is envisaged to come into force with effect from 1st January, 2010. The Agreement provides for exchange of tariff concessions by India and ASEAN Countries during 01.01.2010 and 31.12.2004.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Majority of the agricultural products are protected under the Agreement by placing them in the Exclusion (Negative) List where no tariff concessions are available of ASEAN countries. A complete list of India's offer is available at http://commerce.gov.in/trade/international_ta_indasean.asp

(e) Does not arise.

Keeping production of Darjeeling tea profitable

†611. SHRI SAMAN PATHAK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state the details of steps proposed to be taken to keep the production of Darjeeling tea profitable and viable?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): The quality, reputation and characteristics of Darjeeling tea are essentially attributable to its geographical origin, It possesses a flavour and quality which sets it apart from other teas. Pioneering work has been done to protect Darjeeling tea as a geographical indication aimed at preventing non-Darjeeling tea from being passed off as Darjeeling tea. The DARJEELING word and logo were the first Geographical Indications to be registered in India under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999. Over Rs.60 lakhs are spent per annum on the legal requirements to protect Darjeeling word and logo globally,

Government is promoting Darjeeling Tea thorough Tea Board by supporting its promotional campaigns, Buyer Seller Meets, Tea Tasting Sessions, Trade Fairs and International Conventions, Darjeeling Tea has also been promoted in domestic markets. Tea Board spends a substantial amount of its Market Promotion Scheme budget on promotion of Darjeeling Tea both within the country and outside. Apart from extending

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.